

A FRATERNAL WORD

on the questions in controversy

between the Wisconsin Synod

and

the Missouri Synod

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INTRODUCTION

This writing is prompted by a feeling of deep concern at the latest developments within the Synodical Conference; the report of the Wisconsin Synod's Standing Committee in Matters of Church Union to the Convention assembled at Watertown, August 5-12, concludes with the statement that The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod "has disrupted the Synodical Conference and made it impossible for us to continue our affiliations with the Missouri Synod." The Wisconsin Synod has postponed action until October 8-9 when a special session of the Wisconsin Synod will be held to consider all matters pertaining to the Wisconsin Synod's relations with the Missouri Synod. We of the Missouri Synod wish to utilize the intervening period to make clear to all members of the Synodical Conference the position of the Missouri Synod on the issues involved. The issues are chiefly these: the adoption of the Common Confession and Missouri's continued negotiations with the American Lutheran Church; Scouting; the Chaplaincy and related matters; the question of Prayer Fellowship and Joint Prayer; and other cases of allegedly unionistic practice. We shall endeavor to make our presentation in a spirit of fraternal candor and ask to be heard in the same spirit.

**THE COMMON CONFESSION
and
CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS
with the
AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH**

When The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod in 1950 adopted the Common Confession, it did so in the conviction, which it still holds, that the Common Confession represents a settlement of the doctrinal differences which have hitherto divided it from the American Lutheran Church. At the same time, The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod provided for the allaying of doubts and misgivings on the part of some of its own membership or of sister synods by resolving that additional statements made necessary by further study or future developments might be submitted by way of clarification and expansion. In the following paragraphs we would like to present the objections to the Common Confession recorded by the Wisconsin Synod officially, particularly in its Convention Proceedings, New Ulm, 1951, and show how The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod has sought to meet these objections. More specifically we present under

- a) The objections recorded by the Wisconsin Synod;
- b) The statements in Common Confession, Part I, adopted by the Missouri Synod;
- c) Additional statements suggested in Common Confession, Part II.

I. The Common Confession

1. The Wisconsin Synod has declared that the Common Confession is "inadequate" in the following points (Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 147).

A. Justification

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, pp. 128-129: "Any clear and correct presentation of this article requires a clear statement that in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ God has already declared every sinner righteous in His sight."
- b) Article VI of Common Confession, Part I states: "Hence forgiveness of sin has been secured and provided for all men. (This is often spoken of as objective justification.)"

Article III states: "God by raising Christ from the dead proclaimed to the world that He has accepted the atonement for man's sin as completed."

(The italics in the text of the Common Confession are those of the Committee.)

- c) Additional statement of Common Confession, Part II, Art. iii (3): "The blessings of this ministry are meant for all races and conditions of men. From these blessings no one may be excluded, since no one is excluded from the forgiveness SPOKEN by God to the world in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ."

B. Conversion

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings, 1951, pp. 129-130: "A clear and correct presentation of the doctrine of conversion must include a rejection of the untenable distinction between a natural and a wilful resistance of man. We note that the Common Confession not only fails to include such a specific rejection, but that its positive wording does not exclude the thought of man's preparing himself for conversion by his refraining from such wilful resistance . . ."
- b) Article VII of Common Confession, Part I, states: "This change of heart with respect to sin, and this reliance upon Christ for salvation from sin is the work of God the Holy Spirit without any cooperation whatsoever from sinful man." Article II states: "Therefore all men are born into this world with original sin;

and being unable to observe God's divine commands, they wilfully continue to transgress God's holy Law in thoughts, words, and deeds."

Nowhere does the Common Confession indicate a distinction between natural and wilful resistance, but speaks of wilful resistance only.

- c) Additional statement from Common Confession, Part II, Art. i (1): "It (the Church) confronts a mankind which without the gracious working of the Holy Spirit is totally corrupt in trespasses and sins, is completely blinded to the will of God, and WILFULLY resists every endeavor of God to save it from destruction."

C. *Election*

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, pp. 130-131: "A correct presentation of this important doctrine must include
 - 1) a clear and unmistakable statement that this election is an election unto faith (Acts 13: 48; Eph. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:13);
 - 2) the positive assurance that this election is a cause of our salvation and what pertains thereto (Trgl. 1065 #8 — Rom. 8:28-30; Jn. 10:27-29; cf. Jn. 6:65);
 - 3) definite recognition of the certainty of this election ("which cannot fail or be overthrown" — Trgl. 1079 #45. Cf. also Mt. 24:24; Jn. 10:27-29; Romans 8:28-30.38f).

These vital and indispensable statements are, however, not to be found in this article of the Common Confession."

- b) Article IV of the Common Confession, Part I, states: "God from eternity, solely because of His grace in Christ, and without any cause whatever in man, elected as His own all those whom He makes and keeps members of His kingdom and heirs of eternal life. The Holy Spirit by the Gospel has called us and assured us of our status before God, testifying to us that He has chosen us

for Himself in Christ from the foundation of the world, and by the imputation of Christ's righteousness has given us the assurance that He will present us faultless before the throne of glory."

c) Additional statements of Common Confession, Part II: Art. x (1):

A cause of our salvation

"The fact that the Church exists, that men believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, is due ultimately to the eternal election of God, who has chosen us in Him (Christ) before the foundation of the world."

Certainty of this election

"God by His Word and Sacrament calls men to faith and keeps them in that faith unto the end. Remaining humbly and gratefully conscious of its origin in God's elective will, the Church is preserved from the fatal delusion that it is a self-caused and self-sustaining institution; and the individual member lives and works in the blessed assurance that nothing shall separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord."

D. *Means of Grace*

- a) Wis. Synod Proceedings 1951, pp. 131-132: "Whether the term 'verbal inspiration' be used or not, it is certainly necessary that a confessional document which undertakes to present the doctrine of inspiration for our times and conditions speak clearly and unmistakably on two points:

- 1) that all that was written in the Holy Scriptures was given by the Holy Ghost;
- 2) that as a result of this inspiration and as an article of faith, inerrancy be claimed not merely for the Scriptures as a whole, but for each particular statement that they contain."

"Because the expression 'verbal inspiration' has been under fire by men who really object to the substance of the doctrine we

are convinced that under these circumstances we should not even yield the term."

- b) Article V (2) of the Common Confession, Part I, states: "The Holy Scriptures constitute His Word to men, centering in the revelation of Himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ for our salvation. . . . He (God) speaks as the infallible and unchanging God, whose message to mankind never changes. Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word, therefore we acknowledge the Holy Scriptures in their entirety as the inspired Word of God. We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word."
- c) Additional statement of Common Confession, Part II, Art. vi (2): "The Holy Scriptures are God's verbally inspired Word, that is, God moved men to write what He wanted recorded in the words He wanted employed. They alone constitute God's inerrant Word to men." Note also Art. viii B (5): Neglecting or omitting any part of the Word of God."
 - 1) Exception is also taken by the Wisconsin Synod to the use in V (6) of the expression: "In the Sacrament Christ enters into the most intimate communion with the members of His Church," Proceedings 1951, p. 131.
 - 2) This criticism apparently ignores the fact that the phrase in question is in antithesis to the widely held Reformed view that the Real Presence means merely that Christ is "only present at the celebration of the Sacrament." Note the connection in which the phrase occurs in Art. V (6).

E. *The Church*

1. Nature and Work

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, pp. 132, 133, 134: Exception is taken to treating the "commission to preach the Gospel" as a "duty." This is called "externalizing the concept of the

Church." "The Church must ever be presented as a creation of the Lord also in the work which it performs on earth."

- b) The immediately preceding context, which speaks of the overwhelming gifts of Christ to the Church, excludes any possibility of taking the Church's "duty" in the sense of an external compulsion. Art. IX, Part I, 1. 2. 3.
- c) Additional statements in Common Confession, Part II, Art. i (3): "The Church, as the beloved of God, reflects its love for God by ministering to all men, especially to those of the household of faith."

Art. x (3): This solemnly joyous expectancy. . . .makes the Church free to act spontaneously according to the promptings of the love that is the pulse beat of its faith."

Cf. the Divine Must which lies upon the whole life of our Lord according to the New Testament.

2. Marks of the Church

- a) Wis. Synod Proceedings 1951, p. 133: "We hold that in this connection (Art. X, 1) a further statement is indispensable, namely, that this use of the Means of Grace constitutes the marks of the Church."
- b) Although Article IX of the Common Confession, Part I, does not expressly speak of the use of the means of grace as constituting the marks of the Church, the organic connection between the Church's existence and the use of the means of grace is so strongly stated that the absence of the term "marks" can hardly be felt as a defect. Cf. Art. IX, 1, 2, 3.
- c) Additional statement of the Common Confession, Part II, Art. viii A (3): "The means of grace. . . . are the only genuine marks of the Church, and by them Christ through the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith in the hearts of men."

3. Church Fellowship

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 134: "Except for the lack of definition of 'unscriptural cooperation' and the absence of any reference to the question of prayer fellowship, we find ourselves in wholehearted agreement with the principles in themselves. But we cannot approve the statement that 'we must also be alert and susceptible to the Lord's leading to establish and maintain fellowship with those whom He has made one with us in the faith'? How can we recognize 'those whom He has made one with us in the faith'? Their faith is invisible until it comes out into the open by word and deed. How can we know the 'erring and wayward' except by their confession?"
 - b) Article IX, 5 of the Common Confession, Part I, makes plain that a profession of faith in word and deed is presupposed throughout.
 - c) Additional statements of Common Confession, Part II, Art. viii, B (5): "To overlook divergence from the Word of God in the teaching and life of other Christians, to tolerate false teaching and practice contrary to Scripture, and to be silent in the face of denials of the Word of God likewise contribute to the disruption of the unity of the Church."
- Art. viii, B (8) : "There is no warrant in the Scriptures to disregard error and errorists. . . . If the Church's admonition of love remains unheeded, separation as a final endeavor of love becomes inevitable." Cf. Art. viii, Part II, in its entirety.

F. Antichrist

- a) Relative to the papacy as the Antichrist, Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 135 state: "The qualified statement of the Common Confession ('still clearly discernible') leaves room for uncertainty as to the permanence of this conclusion."
- b) This question is dealt with adequately in the Common Confes-

sion, Part I, Art. XII (2). The Antichrist has not only been revealed in the past, but is "still clearly discernible" as the "climax of all human usurpation of Christ's authority to the Church." "Still" indicates that we hold to the position of our Confessions; "climax" indicates that we look for no other fulfillment.

G. *Sunday*

- a) Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 135: The omission of any reference to this doctrine is criticized.
- b) It is public doctrine in the American Lutheran Church that the observance of Sunday does not rest on a command of God.
2. The Wisconsin Synod maintains that the adoption of the Common Confession Part I "involves an untruth and creates a basically untruthful situation. . . . a settlement of past differences which are in fact not settled," Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 147. The Missouri Synod should, therefore, "repudiate its stand that the Common Confession is a settlement of the doctrines treated by the two committees (Mo.-ALC)." p. 147. This charge and this demand are based on the assumption that the Common Confession, Part I, is inadequate. Since, as we have shown, the inadequacy of the Common Confession, Part I, has not been proved, the charge falls and the demand cannot fairly be made.
3. In order to allay fears that have been expressed that certain statements of the Common Confession, Part I, did not settle past differences, and to convince all of the adequacy of the Common Confession, Part I, the Missouri Synod authorized its Committee on Doctrinal Unity to provide clarifications and expansions of the Common Confession, Part I. These the Committee on Doctrinal Unity presented to the Houston Convention in 1953 in the form of the Common Confession, Part II. The ALC Commissioners have agreed to all of these clarifications. The Houston Convention, acting deliberately and with fraternal consideration refrained from taking any conclusive action on the Common Confession, Part II; it has, instead, asked its own members and those of sister-synods to study Parts I and II of the Common Confession as one document, with the understanding that Part II has not yet been adopted.

II. Negotiations with the American Lutheran Church

- A. Wisconsin asks Missouri to suspend negotiations on the basis of a quotation from ALC's "Friendly Invitation" of March 4, 1947, where mention is made of "an area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teaching of the Word of God." This position, says Wisconsin, "challenges the clarity and, therefore, the authority of the Scripture," Wis. Syn. Proceedings 1951, p. 148.

Wisconsin, furthermore, maintains that "the obstacle to the renewal of doctrinal discussions" will not have been removed "until the American Lutheran Church recognizes this as the basic problem which must first be considered and settled." p. 148.

- B. To this the Missouri Synod answers that this "basic problem" has in fact been taken up by its Committee on Doctrinal Unity and the ALC Commissioners in the formulation of Common Confession, Part II. We point to Art. viii, B, 2 (7) as evidence that the problem is in process of being solved in a God-pleasing manner: "Ultimately all the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures have an organic connection with the central theme of the Scriptures, which is the Gospel. A denial of any teaching of the Scriptures involves a mutilation of, and departure from, the complete Gospel, and it is for this reason that a full and common obedience to the Holy Scriptures is an indispensable requisite for church fellowship."

Observation 1: Missouri and Wisconsin differ in this that

- a) Wisconsin says: You must suspend negotiations with ALC until ALC has first settled the matter of "allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion, etc." Wis. Syn. Proceedings, 1951. pp. 147-148.
- b) Missouri says: How can a settlement be brought about when we refuse to study the Word of God with the ALC in this matter? We are convinced we must continue to "negotiate" and seek to settle any difference in this area also by joint study of God's Word as long as ALC is ready to study God's Word.

Can Wisconsin say for its approach: This is the commandment of the Lord? Can Wisconsin prove from God's Word that Missouri's approach in this matter is not according to God's will? Has not the Lord blessed the approach that was made in the adoption of the aforementioned paragraph on fellowship?

Observation 2: Missouri has never refused to hearken to the Word of God in all of its dealings in connection with the Common Confession, if that Word has been clearly applied. Missouri has shown itself willing at all times to listen to the sister synods in the Synodical Conference and to any one in its own midst. It is now ready to listen to every suggestion offered; and it is waiting three more years in order to give its own people and folks in sister synods opportunity for further study and suggestions.

Missouri, however, cannot be expected to have its conscience bound with regard to method and manner of dealing with a situation as long as it continues to use God's Word and is faithful to that Word. Method and manner are debatable and subject to human judgment; Wisconsin should not demand conformity there as something demanded by God Himself.

In conclusion: Can Wisconsin on the basis of this situation declare that God demands of it a severing of fellowship relations with Missouri?

BOY SCOUTS

The question of Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops has been given more or less consideration in the synods comprising the Synodical Conference for about thirty years. In The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod there was neither unanimity of opinion nor uniformity of practice. For that reason various commissions and boards of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, upon resolution of Synod, held a number of meetings extending over a period of years with officials of the Boy Scouts of America. In 1944 the Committee on Fraternal Organizations reported to the Saginaw Convention that it had received definite assurances from the Boy Scouts of America that "there is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local Pastor and the Congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in Scouting." The Convention adopted the recommendation of the Committee "that the matter of Scouting should be left to the individual congregation to decide and that under the circumstances Synod may consider her interests sufficiently protected." (Proceedings, 1944, p. 257)

In 1945 the Wisconsin Synod at a Convention in Watertown, took official action disapproving the Boy Scouts of America.

This difference between the synods on the Boy Scout question was discussed in the Intersynodical Relations Committee of the Synodical Conference and in 1950 the Synodical Conference resolved that the Presidents of the constituent Synods "appoint a committee to study the question of Scouting and to submit its report to the next convention of the Synodical Conference." (Proceedings of the 41st Convention, p. 138)

The objections raised in the meantime by the Wisconsin Synod to Missouri's stand on the Boy Scouts may be summarized as follows:

- a. That Missouri has withdrawn its former objections to Scouting and thus has created serious cause of offense within our Synodical Conference;
- b. That Missouri has not in its reports on Scouting touched upon the material issues listed by the Wisconsin Synod or on the factual evidence of matters which are held to be in conflict with Bible principles;
- c. In refusing to do this it has not informed its members of the Wisconsin Synod's objection to Scouting and has in this way "interposed an effective censorship." (Wisconsin Synod Proceedings 1951, pp. 141-142)

During 1951 and 1952 the committee of the Synodical Conference devoted four two-day meetings and a sub-committee meeting to its task. The deliberations led to the following divided report to the 1952 convention of the Synodical Conference:

I

The Report of the Missouri Synod and Slovak Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting

A. A general statement of fact:

Scoutism is not agitating the Missouri Synod, nor is it a problem in the Slovak Lutheran Church.

B. Two basic principles:

Scoutism must be judged —

1. On the basis of its constitution which describes its character, aims, and purposes;
2. On the basis of official interpretations of Scout headquarters.

C. Findings based on these principles:

1. Scoutism is a secular boys' organization designed to promote good

citizenship. (That Scoutism advocates a life governed by religious principles does not make it a religious movement.)

2. Scoutism does not teach religion. (Scoutism expects the churches to add the religious element without which the program is incomplete.) There are indeed in the Scout handbooks occasional religious statements which are in conflict with our religious convictions and the professed purpose of Scoutism. However, the Church has the opportunity to express its concern to Scout headquarters regarding such statements, and we know from experience that our concerns are heeded.
3. Scoutism "maintains that no boy can grow into the best kind of citizenship without recognizing his obligation to God." (Scoutism, however, does not demand a deistic concept of God.)
4. Scoutism does not promise spiritual blessings such as forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation, peace with God, etc., to those who obey the Scout law.
5. The Scout oath is not an oath in the religious sense, but a pledge.
6. Scouting has eliminated features which were objectionable. (E.G., the original deistic concept of God, unionistic practices, naturalistic instruction.)
7. "There is no Boy Scout authority which supersedes the authority of the local pastor and the congregation in any phase of the program affecting the spiritual welfare of Lutheran men and boys in Scouting."

D. Inevitable conclusions:

1. We dare not burden the conscience by making something a sin which is no sin.
2. The matter of Scouting on the local level should be left to the judgment of the local congregation.

3. Certain voiced objections to Scouting stem from —
 - a. false views concerning Scout principles;
 - b. false views or false applications of Scriptural teachings in the area of the natural knowledge of God and the natural law;
 - c. an apparent unwillingness to accept documented evidence in support of principles under which Scouting is now conducted in its relation to the churches.

II

The Report of the Norwegian Synod and Wisconsin Synod Members of the Synodical Conference Committee on Scouting

- A. After discussing the Scout movement in the aforementioned meetings we are of the conviction that in some of the fundamental features of the Scout program there are religious elements with which a Christian cannot identify himself without offending against the Word of God:
 1. In its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to lead boys to do their duty to God without conversion; cf. Rom. 8:8; John 3:6;
 2. By means of its mandatory Scout oath and law Scouting endeavors to train character without the motivation of the Gospel, cf. Gal. 2:19-20; Gal. 3:10; Eph. 2:8-10; and John 15:5;
 3. The "Scout oath or promise" is an oath condemned by the Word of God, Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12; Matt. 23: 16-22;
 4. The twelfth Scout law is basically unionistic, since it obligates every Scout to faithfulness in his religious duties without defining these duties or the God whom he is to serve, cf. 2 John 9-10; 2 Cor. 6:14-18.
- B. After discussing the Scout movement in the afore-mentioned meetings we are also of the conviction —
 1. That these objectionable features have not been removed by any changes that have been made in the organization and program of Scouting;

2. That our objections to Scouting are not invalidated by anything that the Word of God teaches concerning the natural knowledge of God and civic righteousness;
3. That the objectionable features of Scouting are still not excluded by the provisions which this organization makes for operating Scout troops under the control of Lutheran pastors and congregations;
4. That membership of Lutheran troops in the national Scout organization vitiates the clear testimony to sin and grace which the Christian Church owes to the world.

The convention adopted the following Resolution:

Whereas, Discussions of Scoutism in the Intersynodical Boy Scout Committee have disclosed divergent views regarding the natural law, the natural knowledge of God, and civil righteousness; and

Whereas, Agreement on these doctrines is a prerequisite for a solution of the Boy Scout question; and

Whereas, A profound study of these doctrinal differences transcends the normal functions of a committee on Scoutism; therefore be it

Resolved, That this convention authorize a joint study of these doctrines by the several seminary faculties of the Synodical Conference and that they report their findings to the next convention.

The convention further

Resolved "that it is the wish of the Synodical Conference convention that the results of the studies of the doctrines concerning natural law, natural knowledge of God, and civil righteousness, which are a prerequisite for the solution of the Boy Scout question, be made available to every member of the Synodical Conference through the congregations of the constituent Synods."

See Proceedings of Syn. Conf. 1952, pp. 145-148

The faculties have begun their study of the doctrines underlying this issue. Should not our faculties be given sufficient time to complete their

study, make it available to the congregations, and report to the Synodical Conference? Missouri has never once said or indicated that it will not bow before God's Word in matters of practice. Its consistent stand on lodgery, where the Word of God speaks plainly, indicates Missouri's willingness to let the Word of God rule. Missouri is ready and willing to let the Word of God decide this issue. But Missouri is not willing to accept a resolution of any church body in this matter as deciding the issue. Wisconsin has not proved to the satisfaction of the Missouri Synod that Wisconsin's interpretation and understanding of the Scout program is correct and therefore Missouri cannot admit that the Bible passages quoted are applicable to the situation.

Can Wisconsin therefore say that the Boy Scout issue, as it has developed in the Synodical Conference, is a reason that will stand before God for breaking fellowship relations with Missouri?

THE CHAPLAINCY

In 1932 the St. Louis and Thiensville faculties adopted Theses on the Church and Ministry. In 1952 the Synodical Conference adopted them as "soundly Biblical, clearly expressing basic Scriptural concepts pertaining to the Doctrine," adding the statement that the adoption of these theses proves "that there is a substantial basis for agreement among us in this matter." (Proceedings 1952, p. 144)

The resolution, however, also stated "that there is no complete agreement within the Synodical Conference when these basic concepts of the doctrine of the Church and Ministry are translated into the practical life of the Church and its Ministry," mentioning as evidence of this especially the chaplaincy question and stating that "the original report of the Interim Committee clearly refers to this realm of disagreement among us."

Because of this disagreement in the application of the principles expressed in this doctrine, the Synodical Conference resolved "that 'any problem arising from the application of these basic principles' and any elaborations on the Theses on Church and Ministry be referred to the faculties of the theological seminaries of the Synodical Conference, acting jointly, and that said faculties, acting jointly, report to the 1954 convention of our Synodical Conference concerning any progress made."

Concerning the chaplaincy question the following special resolution was adopted by the Synodical Conference:

"Whereas, the chaplaincy question in reality belongs to 'the problems arising from the application of these basic principles' of Church and Ministry, your Floor Committee moves

That the chaplaincy question be referred . . . to the faculties of the theological seminaries, acting jointly."

When all synods of the Synodical Conference have reached full agreement on the basic principles underlying the chaplaincy question, most assuredly there is no reason to sever fellowship with the Missouri Synod, but every reason to continue negotiations for a God-pleasing settlement of the practical working-out of this question.

Certainly the faculties should be given due time to carry out the request of the Synodical Conference. They have begun their work, and all synods of the Synodical Conference owe it to them to await their report.

COOPERATION WITH UNAFFILIATED CHURCH BODIES IN SERVICE CENTERS

We believe that the cooperation of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod with the National Lutheran Council in establishing and maintaining service centers for our military personnel is strictly a cooperation in externals, which does not involve church fellowship. The Articles of Agreement and Statement of Organization make clear the external character of this cooperation in the following declaration concerning the

"Aim and Function of Parish Centers and Service Offices"

- "A. To provide a spiritual ministry to Lutheran men and women in uniform by bringing them within range of local Lutheran religious life.
- "B. To provide such recreation, church and home hospitality as are available locally through Lutheran congregations.
- "C. To serve service personnel, their parents and friends with respect to housing, temporary or permanent, and provide other services as are available through local Lutheran congregations."

Concerning "Spiritual Ministry" the Articles of Agreement state:

- "A. A parish center or service office shall coordinate information on all local religious services and be prepared to direct servicemen and women to the church of their choice.
- "B. Devotional and social activities of organized religious groups, such as the Luther League, Walther League, Brotherhood, etc., shall likewise be made available to service personnel. Local religious groups should be encouraged to welcome service men at all times."

If service centers and service offices are maintained strictly in accord with the Articles of Agreement, there will be no violation of the principles of church fellowship, for we are convinced that the Articles of Agreement and Statement of Organization in no way countenance unionistic practice.

JOINT PRAYER AT INTERSYNODICAL CONFERENCES

The position of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in this matter, expressed in the resolution adopted at the Saginaw Convention in 1944 and reaffirmed at Chicago in 1947, has been repeated in the following resolution at the Houston Convention in 1953:

Whereas, Such prayer at intersynodical meetings does not pretend that doctrinal unity exists where it does not exist, nor intimate that doctrinal differences are unimportant, but rather implores God from whom true unity in the Spirit must come, for His blessing, in order that unity may be achieved in those things where it is lacking; be it therefore

Resolved, That Synod declare that it does not consider "joint prayer" at inter-synodical meetings unionistic and sinful, "provided such prayer does not imply denial of truth or support of error".....

We believe that this resolution does not violate Romans 16:17, as is claimed in a resolution of the Wisconsin Synod (Proceedings 1951, p. 140), because it does not set up a fellowship relation implying denial of truth or support of error.

However, we are willing, upon the request of the Synodical Conference, to restudy this position on the basis of God's Word and are planning to do so in the Intersynodical Relations Committee with the hope of reaching "a soundly Scriptural resolution," (Syn. Conf. Proceedings, 1952, p. 155).

OTHER CASES OF ALLEGEDLY UNIONISTIC PRACTICE

The Report of the Floor Committee on Church Union to the Convention of the Wisconsin Synod assembled at Watertown, Wisconsin, August 5-12, offers as additional evidence for the unionistic spirit allegedly manifested in Missouri's practice:

The same unionistic spirit is observable in the arrangements that have been made for communion with Lutherans not in fellowship with us, under the excuse of emergency; in negotiations with lodges to make changes in their rituals, and in cooperating in various other areas with the excuse that safeguards have been set up to avoid unionism.

No evidence is offered to show that the arrangement regarding communion in the Armed Services, an arrangement designed to cover strictly exceptional cases which arise in the life of the military, is in fact unionistic in character or "in clear violation of the principle set forth in Missouri's own resolution on Romans 16" (Wisconsin Proceedings, 1951, p. 141). The exceptional nature of these cases is made clear by Paragraph 7 of the Articles of Agreement: "Just as in our civilian church life, there are exceptions to the usual procedure in the administration of the Lord's Supper, thus exceptional cases arise in dealing with the men and women in the armed forces." The fact that the arrangement can be and has been abused by some Lutheran chaplains or pastors in the interest of a unionistic practice does not call into question the correctness or the advisability of the arrangement itself.

Our negotiations with lodges to make changes in their rituals strike us as being the very opposite of unionism, since these are in fact an active and militant confession of our faith. The reference to cooperation in other areas is so general that we deem it advisable to leave a discussion of it for future personal meetings.



CONCLUSION

We are of the conviction that the principles we have laid down regarding the areas of practice discussed above are scripturally sound. We are also painfully and penitently aware of the fact that we are men and that there have been, may be, and will be infractions of these principles. Such infractions we are determined to deal with, firmly, charitably, and evangelically. We should like to remind our brethren in the Synodical Conference that the golden burden of giving fraternal admonition and of receiving it meekly and repentantly is laid upon us all, that we must all repent daily and in the humility and strength thus gained practice the mutual admonition and upbuilding for which our fathers designed the Synodical Conference. We all need to be warned and encouraged by the brethren who love us; only they can admonish and upbuild us.

THE REV. H. HARMS, D. D.

THE REV. A. H. GRUMM, D. D.

PROF. M. FRANZMANN, B. A.

PROF. A. VON ROHR SAUER, Ph. D.

PROF. PAUL KOEHNEKE

Issued by

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD
210 N. Broadway
St. Louis 2, Missouri